



SUCCESS STORIES

REPORTING EXAMPLES OF OUR PROGRESS IN CARING FOR THE LAND AND SERVING PEOPLE



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Hiawatha Welcomes Friends of the Forest

As Forest Plans are being revised—prompting greater public scrutiny and a spirited collaboration among a rich assortment of public interest groups—the need to share information and access to the decision-making process becomes all the more important.

On July 17, the Hiawatha National Forest hosted a “Friends of the Hiawatha National Forest” (Friends) meeting and tour. Among the dozen or so attendees were interested individuals and regional/local representatives of a number of recreation, timber and environmental organizations.

Additionally, local aides from U.S. Senators Debbie Stabinow’s and Carl Levin’s offices were in attendance.

Following introductions and coffee, Forest Supervisor Tom Schmidt welcomed the visitors. Then, Forest Planner Dave Maercklein presented an update and overview of where the Hiawatha’s Forest Plan revision process currently stands. He outlined the range of alternatives, answered questions related to the process, and encouraged public input and comment.



The Forest tour included a stop at the edge of a vast jack pine stand to highlight fire breaks.

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Comments from the Friends ranged from questions about species monitoring and timber availability concerns to the revised Plan’s proposals for the identification of routes and trails for OHV and snowmobile traffic.

The Forest made it clear that the information that was shared was preliminary, and subject to change through further analysis; however, the Forest wanted to be able to provide a snapshot of how the revised forest plan might address the issues that were identified in the Notice of Intent.

After an informal lunch at the Rapid River Ranger District, the group piled into a convoy of Forest vehicles and set out for five field sites to discuss the implementation and application of HFI/HFRA tools on the landscape. Along the way, subject matter experts offered detailed perspectives on thinning, open savannah sites, community involvement in fire planning and fuels treatments, and the challenges posed in the Wildland-Urban Interface.

The Forest will continue sharing information with individuals and groups interested in the Forest Plan Revision Process and in coordination with the other Michigan National Forests.

The three Michigan National Forests are forecasted to issue draft environmental impact statements in Spring 2005, and complete their revised Plans in Spring 2006.

For more information contact Lee Ann Loupe at (906) 789-3329



Homes Sold Through Pilot Conveyance



Two homes built by Job Corps students in the 1970s were sold to local residents.

Two houses that had provided shelter and comfort for more than 30 years to Forest Service families assigned to the Elizabethtown Ranger District on the Shawnee National Forest were sold to private owners on July 7, 2004.

The sale of these houses, constructed by students from the Golconda Job Corps Conservation Camp during the early 1970's, was authorized by the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-63, Section 329), as Reauthorized for Fiscal Year 2003 (P.L. 108.7). The homes in Elizabethtown were one of ten land transactions authorized by this action nationally.

The Shawnee National Forest Facilities Master Plan had identified these houses as being excess property. This decision was based on Forest reorganization plans that had resulted in the reduction of the staff assigned to the Elizabethtown Office.

These houses had been unoccupied for more than three years, and were beginning to have visible signs of physical deterioration. Based on the fact that Elizabethtown is a small rural community with a relatively inactive real estate market, Forest personnel contracted with a private realtor to list the property and consult with prospective buyers. These houses were on the market for nearly a year before acceptable offers were submitted.

During public consultation prior to the NEPA decision to pursue this transaction, the response was positive. Elizabethtown residents were anxious to see these homes occupied to assist in stabilizing the community.

For more information contact Marion Bunch at (618) 253-7114

Hoosier Holds Adventures in Nature Program

Activities, demonstrations, door prizes, and crafts were all part of the Adventures in Nature program held June 26 at the Hoosier National Forest. This event was held at the Tipsaw Lake Recreation Area and attracted close to 150 people. It was coordinated by the Lincoln Hills RC&D and boasted ten sponsors and the Forest Service.

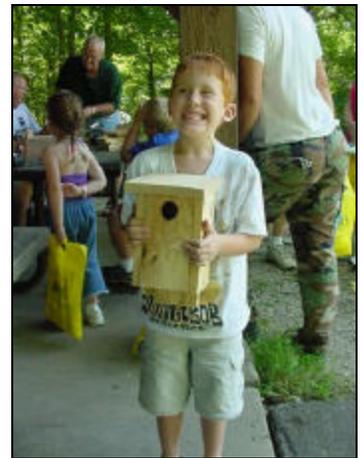
"The attendance was awesome," said Forest wildlife biologist Cindy Basile, who had a table at the event. "I did Birding 101. We talked about what to look for on a bird to be able to identify them, had some coloring books, played bird bingo, and made bird feeders out of pine cones."

Fisheries Biologist Anne Timm had a booth on amphibians of Indiana and aquatic insects. Basile noted that one of the real successes of any event is that it inspires people to learn more or get involved with the environment.

She explained one of the gentlemen who visited Timm's booth called her a couple of weeks later interested in volunteering. Timm took him and his family out to do a NAAMP (North American Amphibian Monitoring Program) route, "and hopefully, as a result of this contact, this family will make a long term commitment to help us monitor amphibians on the Forest."

"There were lots of kids and they were super interested in what we had to offer," Basile explained. "We had them building bluebird nesting boxes, learning to fish, and playing games. People came, stayed, and seemed to have a great time. It was really impressive to have that many people there interested in nature."

For more information contact Teena Ligman at (812) 277-3579



One participant shows off the bluebird house he built.



After the Storm: One Year Later



The violent storm leveled vast tracts on the Allegheny NF.

For the past year, life on the Allegheny National Forest has been hectic. A flurry of activity surrounded the Forest in the days following the July 21 storm that struck the Forest last year. And over the past year the amount of activity has only increased, as scoping letters and decision memos were completed.

Of the over one half million acres that make up the Forest, scattered patches within an area of almost 100,000 acres were affected by the storm. In the first few hours after the storm, making sure visitors and employees were safe was the priority. While some people were definitely a little soggy, no one was seriously injured or trapped in a remote area of the Forest.

Roughly 579 miles of trail and road were damaged by the storm. In the past 12 months, 521 miles of trail and road have been cleared and re-opened thanks to the efforts of many volunteers, special interest groups and Forest employees.

Most of the trails affected were cleared within the first two months, and the Allegheny Snowmobile Loop was cleared and opened in time for the 2003-2004 riding season.

Groups such as the North Country Trail Association, Allegheny National Forest Chapter, have contributed a great deal of time and assistance in clearing the hiking trails. The North Country Trail Association received a grant from their National Chapter, which was used to hire a professional chainsaw operator who cleared sections of the North Country trail affected by the storm.

“By September of 2003, the Forest Service had a good idea of where the impacts were,” said Bradford Deputy District Ranger Nancy Larson. Of the 9,333 acres damaged in the storm, an estimated 4,500 were scattered across areas normally managed for timber. These 4,500 acres provide an opportunity for salvage harvest projects.

The remaining 4,300 acres needed more extensive planning and analysis to determine where salvage activities would occur. To date, 19 projects have been developed using a more streamlined documentation tool called the Limited Timber Harvest Categorical Exclusion. This allows for a more timely and efficient response to the salvage task.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service worked with the Forest Service to address possible negative effects for threatened or endangered species living on the Forest. This survey was one of many conducted during the past year.

Thirty-five Forest Service employees from 12 other Forests around the country along with a Regional Office representative all came to the Allegheny to help salvage trees that fell during the storm. By the time their work is completed, they will have provided over 90 weeks of service to the Allegheny.

Riparian areas are being left to protect and restore streamside areas, a desired future condition in the current Forest Plan. Other areas are being left as they are because salvage is not a necessary function for these areas. In these areas, the fallen trees will provide habitat for animals such as ruffed grouse, and contribute to the future life of the Forest through the decaying process.

Allegheny Forest Supervisor Kevin Elliott expresses his pleasure that “one year later we are beginning to salvage the timber from the storm while maintaining public involvement and following the guidelines and standards to protect our other natural resources.”

For more information contact Janeal Hedman at (814) 723-5150





Northern Bats Dominate Summer Survey

In June and July 2004, Forest Service biologists spent several nights capturing bats alongside field crews from Third Rock Consultants based in Lexington, Kentucky. Knowing what bats occur in the Wayne National Forest, and where they occur, is important to land managers as they plan and implement projects to restore and improve habitat for forest wildlife species.

Summer bat surveys are identified in the Wayne's Conservation Plan for Federally Listed Species as an activity important for determining the range of the endangered Indiana bat on the National Forest.

The survey work included netting 39 sites on the Marietta Unit and 17 sites on the Ironton Unit. Two mist net sets were erected at each of the sites. While no Indiana bats were captured in the nets, biologists recorded six different species: little brown bat, northern bat, eastern pipistrelle, big brown bat, red bat, and hoary bat.

Katrina Schultes, a Wayne National Forest wildlife technician and the bat survey coordinator, reported that the northern bat was commonly caught across the two units, whereas fewer than expected little brown bats were captured.

"We did capture a female hoary bat that was lactating, and that was exciting because they are gorgeous bats that are not observed very often," Schultes said. Hoary bats are the biggest bats that live in the Forest and in Ohio, and they roost among the foliage in the trees.

"This captured female probably had two pups waiting for her in a roost tree somewhere in the vicinity of our net location," Schultes explained. Biological data for each individual bat adds to the biologists' understanding of the bat populations living in the forest.

Data from the 56 net sites will be compiled into a final report, due to be completed by mid-October 2004.



Katrina Schultes checks the age of a brown bat during the summer bat survey.

For more information contact Teena Ligman at (812) 277-3579

Marietta Unit Spreads Fire Message in Local Parades



Smokey and his escorts prepare for a community parade.

On the Marietta Unit of the Wayne National Forest, the Forest Service is part of the community.

"Every little community in the area counts on us to have Smokey Bear and a fire truck in their parades and to show up at their festivals," said Dan Kincaid, District Ranger. "They know who we are, and that we care about them and take the time to stop and talk to them."

Kincaid sees community outreach as an important part of the District's mission and praises the employees on the Marietta unit for their willingness to spend their Saturday's attending parades.

This summer has seen the Marietta unit participating in several events.

"At the Antioch Parade on July 9, we were honored with a trophy for Best Appearing fire truck in our class," said Jessica Magoto, a new frontliner on the Forest.

She said the people of these communities all had positive feedback and greatly appreciated their participation. "They've invited us back in the years to follow," she laughed, "so my calendar is already filling up for 2005."

Kincaid and Magoto agreed that the festivals and parades are a great opportunity to spread the fire prevention message to communities within the Wayne National Forest's proclamation boundary.

For more information contact Teena Ligman at (812) 277-3579



Employees and Volunteers Team Up on Garlic Mustard ‘Pulls’

Monongahela National Forest employees and volunteers physically removed hundreds of pounds of garlic mustard on several sites on the Forest in an effort to slow the spread of the noxious invader.

While the non-native plant is not yet as widespread as in other states, garlic mustard has been found in increasing numbers over the last few years. Some of the newly discovered populations may be due to more employees knowing what the plant looks like, in both its first- and second-year stages.

One mustard ‘pull’ was conducted on 1 1/3 miles of de-commissioned road. While there is a relatively small patch of the plant on adjoining private land, it was determined that the infestation of the road was due to contaminated mulch used to put the old mine access road to bed. The actual road decommissioning was done by a State agency in cooperation with the Forest Service.

It turned out to be a good opportunity to educate a fellow land management agency about the problem garlic mustard poses. When Forest geologist Linda Tracy realized the entire length of the road had a vigorous stand of the invasive plant and that it had gotten there from the mulch she contacted the State agency.

Because the plant is so recently understood as an invasive, no one in the State agency had even heard of it.

Feeling that the Forest was responsible, however inadvertently, for the introduction of the plant along the former road, Tracy planned a work project and convinced a half dozen or so of her fellow employees and some volunteers to become gardeners.

Working on steep slopes over the course of three days, just under five acres of garlic mustard was pulled and carefully bagged. This amounted to 115 garbage bags at about 35 pounds each, or 2 tons of material.

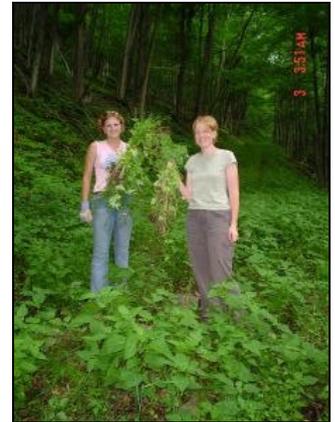
Approximately 180 person hours were spent on the pulling and bagging with more hours later to haul the bags down the mountain and away to the landfill. Because no motorized access of the site was possible due the de-commissioning work, all of the bags had to be hauled down the mountain by hand or on crude sleds. Great care was used to avoid ripping open any of the heavy duty plastic bags so that any ripening seeds were contained.

Another ‘pull’ was done by Forest ecologist Melissa Thomas-Van Gundy who spent part of a lovely weekend day pulling garlic mustard by herself in the virgin spruce area of Gaudineer Knob. While the patch pulled was only about 1/10 acre in size, it was growing in an ecologically sensitive and unusual area.

A third ‘pull’ was conducted by Marlinton District Ranger Rondi Fischer and four others who cleared about five acres of the mustard. Parts of the area they cleared were estimated at being covered 90 percent by the mustard.

While all of the pulls set back individual populations of the garlic mustard, no one thinks they have been eradicated. Due to the biannual nature of the plant, and the inability to pull 100 percent of the plants in each area, it will require several more years of similar efforts to eradicate the pest in these areas.

Unfortunately more populations are waiting to be discovered.



Cara Sponaugle and Sarah Polgar show off their ‘pull’ of garlic mustard.

For more information contact Kate Goodrich-Arling at (304) 636-1800





Monongahela Employees Honored For Rescuing Capsized Anglers



Jim Burton and David Buck flank Undersecretary Mark Rey during their trip to Washington, D.C.

Two Monongahela National Forest employees were recently honored by the Secretary of Agriculture for saving the life of an angler whose boat had capsized.

Jim Burton and David Buck were working at Summit Lake in September 2003 when they heard cries for help. An angler had fallen from his fishing boat, and when he surfaced had grabbed the side of the vessel causing it to capsize, throwing the second angler into the water.

While their craft was equipped with flotation devices, neither man was wearing one at the time of the accident. Eighty-four year-old angler Glen Pittsenberger was unable to swim, so his companion Robert James attempted to tow the boat and non-swimmer to shore.

The capsized boat was too much for James to tow, so he swam to shore to look for a rope. When he couldn't find one, he once more swam back to his friend to keep him company and encourage the older man to hang onto

the boat.

By this time both men were cold, exhausted, and unable to do much more than hold on.

When James heard the sound of the Forest Service truck he began to call for help. David Buck responded by stripping off his shirt and boots and swimming out to the stranded men. Jim Burton pulled the Forest Service truck as close as he could and turned the heater on high as there was concern about hypothermia.

Buck was able to assist Pittsenberger to shore and to the waiting vehicle. Once both anglers were safely out of the water, both Buck and Burton set about retrieving the overturned boat and collecting the fishing equipment which was still floating in the lake.

Robert James was so grateful for the help provided by Buck and Burton that he wrote a letter to their supervisor and commended the men for their extraordinary efforts.

In that letter, James wrote: "Had it not been for Mr. Buck and Mr. Burton, my friend, Glen Pittsenberger, could probably have drowned as I was unable to assist him. It is also possible that I might have perished with him as I would have made every effort to save his life."

James has since donated two Bibles in honor of the Forest Service employees.

Both Buck and Burton received the Regional Forester's Honor Award for heroism and emergency response for their actions. They were then nominated for, and received, an award in the same category from the Secretary of Agriculture.

Both men made the trip to Washington, D.C., along with Forest Supervisor Clyde Thompson, to receive their award.

For more information contact Kate Goodrich-Arling at (304) 636-1800





Forest Rolls Out Digital Soils Map

The Geographic Information Systems team on Wayne National Forest has completed its three-year task of creating a comprehensive digital soils map for all the area where the Forest manages land.

The map integrates soil type information across twelve counties in Ohio. The addition of these counties completes the Forest's digital soils map layer.

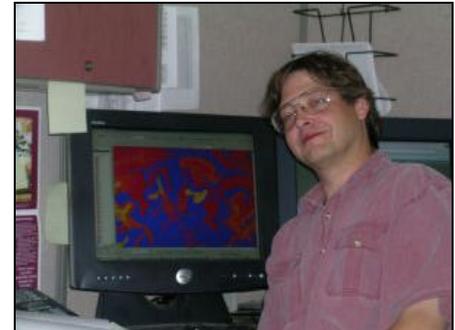
The project began on August 17, 2001, when the Wayne entered into a Participating Agreement with the Ohio DNR - Division of Soil and Water Conservation. The two agencies worked together to complete the digital soils mapping.

Aaron Burk, the Wayne's GIS Coordinator, explained that "this standardized soils information is valuable for several agencies, including county health and planning departments, the Ohio EPA, the Ohio Department of Transportation, and the NRCS."

In the past, soil types were only available by county and in the form of a hardcopy aerial photograph. Their uses were limited and confined to a very specific location. "Our new information allows decision makers to view all soils throughout the forest in a much more comprehensive nature," Burk said.

He pointed out that the digital map can be utilized "in applications ranging from assessing potential riparian areas across the entire Forest, to aiding in the calculation of site locations for oil and gas wells." The new program allows land managers the ability to measure environmental impacts and develop appropriate mitigation measures. Previous use of soil maps was confined and narrow.

The new system will allow the user to search for items like a specific soil type across multiple counties. Such a task would have previously taken a considerable amount of time to complete. The Digital Soils Map will enable users to access such information in a matter of minutes. Sean Lowery, a GIS specialist on the Wayne, pointed out that "It's not just a map anymore, it's a database."



Wayne GIS Specialist Sean Lowry said "It's not just a map, it's a database."

For more information contact Teena Ligman at (812) 277-3579

Whiskered Cats Find New Home on the Shawnee



Shawnee employees stocked the fish in 15 ponds on the Forest.

The Shawnee National Forest has an abundance of small ponds, ranging in size from one to 10 acres. In the past, these ponds were important fishing spots for local anglers. During the 1980s, the ponds were intensively managed by the Illinois DNR and the Forest, resulting in some fantastic fishing for bass, bluegill, and channel catfish.

Unfortunately, budget cuts and other priorities in the 1990's shifted the focus away from the ponds and the fisheries began to decline. There was no shortage of good fishing opportunities for boat anglers, but there was an obvious lack of good fishing spots for bank anglers. More intensive management of Forest ponds seemed an obvious way to fill this void.

This year the Forest decided that it was time to start stocking catfish again. Now, the whiskered cats are once again found in Forest ponds.

Approximately 1,500 one- to two-pound channel catfish (including some "albino catfish") were stocked into 15 of the more popular ponds. Plans for the future include stocking even more ponds and continued stocking each year to ensure good fishing.

For more information contact Marion Bunch at (618) 253-7114



State Educators Invited to Take “A Walk in the Forest”

Clara Weloth, Fisheries and Wildlife Biologist from the White Mountain National Forest Ammonoosuc/Pemigewasset Ranger District, recently participated in an educational program, “A Walk in the Forest.” This program—held at a local tree farm in Bethlehem, NH—was coordinated by the Society of American Foresters and the American Forest Foundation.

As sponsors of Project Learning Tree and the American Tree Farm Program, the groups coordinated this national program for educators from across the Granite State. Weloth presented “Forests as Wildlife Habitat” to more than 30 teachers.

The workshop program incorporates the action-oriented Project Learning Tree (PLT) environmental education activities with New Hampshire school curriculum standards in science, social studies, mathematics, language arts, and reading and writing.

In New Hampshire—the second most forested state in the country—forests play a vital role in the state’s economic well-being and the quality of life for all. We depend on our forests for many reasons, and our forests offer a wide variety of outdoor educational opportunities as well.

Moose antlers, a homemade moose call and artificial bear tracks provided the teachers with examples of environmental resources useful with PLT lesson plans.

“Although 30 plus teachers may not seem like a large number, the effects of a teacher continually sharing the wonders of the forest with today’s youth—our decision makers of tomorrow—is an overall success in the long-term,” Weloth said.

The day of the outdoor workshop coincided with the International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), which celebrates the migration of birds between their southern wintering grounds in Mexico, the Caribbean, Central and South America and their northern breeding sites in the U.S. and Canada.

Participants received Cornell Lab of Ornithology information and Forest Service publications such as, “Tomorrow’s Forests Begin Today.”

The Walk in the Forest workshop offers a wonderful opportunity for today’s teachers to gain hands-on experience while interactively learning about forests, forest practices, fish and wildlife habitat management, and the outdoors as a unique and unparalleled classroom for environmental study.



Clara Weloth’s presentation to educators in New Hampshire coincided with Migratory Bird Day.

For more information contact Colleen Mainville at (603) 528-8796

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